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Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2008/09

Summary

The current report provides an overview of major developments in inter-agency cooperation within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), during the period covering its session in October 2008 and its session in April 2009. In the last year, the global community has been exposed to multiple financial, economic and social crises. Building on intergovernmental mandates and an important set of internal reforms in the prior year, CEB responded to the demands placed on the United Nations system across a range of programme, management and operational matters in a timely and integrated manner.

The unfolding global financial and economic crisis was at the top of the CEB agenda during the reporting period. CEB agreed on nine key areas in a joint initiative that encompasses: additional financing for the most vulnerable; food security; trade; a green economy initiative; a global jobs pact; a social protection floor; humanitarian action, security and social stability; technology and innovation; and monitoring and analysis. This common commitment is designed to assist countries and the global community to confront the crisis, accelerate recovery, and build a fair and inclusive system of globalization based on sustainable economic, social and environmental development for all.

The CEB initiative launched early in 2007 in response to the global challenge of climate change took more concrete shape during the reporting period, with the United Nations system intensifying its efforts at a coordinated and effective delivery. With the original programmatic work at the headquarters level completed, emphasis shifted to delivering results at the regional and country levels. Determined to lead by example, organizations of the United Nations system continued their efforts to move towards a climate-neutral United Nations, with good progress being achieved in that regard.

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The Board endorsed the management and accountability framework for the United Nations development and resident coordinator system, including a functional firewall for the resident coordinator system. The agreement established a vision to guide the creation of a better-managed and more efficient United Nations development system. The reporting period also saw the focus of the eight delivering-as-one pilot projects shift from process orientation to the implementation of programmes jointly developed in the spirit of the One United Nations initiative, in which efforts were aligned with national priorities. An expanded delivering-as-one funding window for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was established. Collaborative efforts were made by the United Nations development system for joint participation in the High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008, and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008.

The United Nations development system actively promoted building and strengthening the relationships between headquarters and country teams to enhance coordination in crisis and post-crisis related processes. With the aim of reducing transaction costs for partner countries and increasing coherence and the impact of the assistance provided, the United Nations and the World Bank in October 2008 signed an agreement concerning a partnership framework for crisis and post-crisis situations.

Given the increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions faced by United Nations personnel in many places of the world, CEB underscored the urgent need to strengthen the United Nations security framework to protect staff and allow operations to continue in insecure and unstable environments. At the request of the Secretary-General, a process of preparing actionable recommendations and options for a more effective United Nations system-wide security management system was initiated.

The Board also actively pursued the development of a plan of action for the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations system. The plan proposes initiatives in key areas covering all major management functions of organizations of the United Nations system and builds on the premise that, within a system structured around a variety of mandates, increased coherence in the working modalities of the member organizations will contribute significantly to their ability to deliver better programmatic results. A funding proposal for the plan of action was circulated to potential donors in October 2008.

During the year, CEB kept abreast of the evolving global situation through updates on a number of topics, including Africa's development needs, financing for development, the global food security crisis, the Millennium Development Goals, system-wide coherence, and trade. Other significant issues on the Board's agenda during the 2008/09 reporting period were its consideration of evaluation; regional coherence; the campaign to end violence against women and girls; the contribution of the United Nations system to the Economic and Social Council; disaster risk reduction; science and technology; International Public Sector Accounting Standards; knowledge-sharing; procurement; collaboration with the Joint Inspection Unit; and coordination of the work of the CEB pillars.

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I. Introduction: a coherent response of the United Nations system to global challenges

1. The increasing effectiveness of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to engender common commitments and coherent responses to current challenges, based on collective mandates and responsibilities, was highlighted during the 2008/09 reporting period. During the year, the global community was exposed to multiple financial, economic and social crises, the consequences of which were compounded by vulnerability due to the earlier food and energy crises. The cumulative effect of the ongoing complex of events risked pushing millions of people into poverty and threatened the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. While the unprecedented severity of the current crisis affects all countries, it is those which have contributed the least to creating it that are suffering its consequences the most.

2. The multifaceted nature of the current global crisis calls for the mobilization of all resources and capacities at the disposal of the United Nations system, delivering as one to assist countries and the international community to support the poor and vulnerable, accelerate recovery, and build a fair and inclusive system of globalization based on sustainable economic, social and environmental development for all.

3. Building on the reforms of its structure and functioning in the prior year, CEB has provided an effective platform for a common response to the demands placed on the United Nations system across a range of programme, management and operational matters in a timely and integrated manner. The three pillars of CEB — the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group — operating with delegated decision-making authority from CEB, have refined their terms of reference and working methods to ensure greater alignment between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels. Country-level operations thus both inform and are informed by the strategic directions and priorities pursued at the programme level in response to intergovernmental mandates. To ensure the flow of information necessary for integration among the three CEB pillars, the Chairs, as well as the respective Committee secretariats, meet on a regular basis to sequence the agendas of their Committees. In 2009, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Juan Somavia, was appointed to the chairmanship of the High-level Committee on Programmes, while the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Josette Sheeran, was appointed Chair of the High-level Committee on Management, and the new Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Helen Clark, took up the chair of the United Nations Development Group at the end of April 2009.

4. At its most recent meeting, held in Paris on 4 and 5 April, CEB endorsed a set of initiatives developed by the High-level Committee on Programmes for a system-wide response to the global financial and economic crisis in nine different areas. While recognizing the importance of the threats posed by longer-term climate change and development challenges, the Board, in pursuing these initiatives, is building upon its ongoing work which is increasingly directed towards developing United Nations responses to emerging challenges. In July 2008, its High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis released a comprehensive framework for

action which articulated the outcomes required to address the crisis and introduce greater food and nutrition security globally, within the broad framework of the right to food. The financial and economic crisis adds a new dimension of vulnerability. Within the context of the CEB response, the initiative on food security addresses the additional needs of an increased population worldwide. As requested by Member States, the United Nations system, working through CEB, is acting on all fronts to fight against hunger and poverty and support efforts to achieve all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

5. The Board is also addressing the challenges presented by climate change, among which, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is a likely increase of up to 170 million in the number of undernourished people, quite apart from the other threats of a changing climate to lives and livelihoods. CEB is developing a system-wide approach to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to prepare for intergovernmental discussions at the United Nations climate change conference, to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009. The United Nations system also remains at the disposal of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in implementing existing and future agreements. Within the context of the CEB response to the global financial and economic crisis, the Board, through the green economy initiative, recognized the importance of promoting investment in long-term environmental sustainability and putting the world on a climate-friendly path.

6. At the time of preparation of the present report, a new influenza virus whose full threat was not yet known was spreading rapidly, demonstrating graphically how few of the problems of the twenty-first century remain contained within national borders, and the critical need to work within multilateral structures to address common problems. As CEB works to develop integrated strategies and plans to inform the operational work of organizations of the United Nations system, it is also striving to ensure that system-wide work is carried out in the most efficient and effective manner through its initiative on the harmonization of business practices throughout the United Nations system.

7. The Board recognizes that coherence in the work of the United Nations system is a goal that it needs constantly to monitor, to ensure the optimal use of resources for the benefit of the world's most vulnerable populations. For this reason, it has tasked the two co-Chairs of its 2007/08 review of its role and functioning, to undertake an assessment of progress made and to make recommendations for further improvement for the consideration of the Board at its session to be held in New York in October 2009.

II. Challenges facing the United Nations system in 2008/09

A. Global financial and economic crisis

8. The unfolding global financial and economic crisis, the most severe economic downturn that the global community has experienced in the past 60 years, was at the top of the CEB agenda during the period under review. In a communiqué issued following the CEB session in April 2009, the executive heads emphasized that the social effects of the crisis were already disturbing and could worsen. Unless urgent action were taken, the crisis could have devastating effects for the most vulnerable

and voiceless, with growing social insecurity and displacement of people. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and of progress in reducing poverty and hunger in developing countries was at stake. There was also need to prevent the global economic crisis from becoming a humanitarian and security risk of potentially immense proportions. In addition, the accelerating trends of climate change presented unprecedented new risks.

9. The Board considered it imperative that the global financial and economic crisis be tackled head-on and be turned into an opportunity for a sustainable future. The multilateral system, which had an important role to play in articulating and delivering a global and coherent response to the crisis and in translating it into action at the country level, should deploy all of its resources and capacities in a rapid and effective response, while upholding the principles, values and goals to which the international community was committed. Responding to the crisis required a coherent and comprehensive strategy which rallied the knowledge, experience, strengths and capacities of the entire system and enhanced the interaction and cooperation that would allow the multilateral system to make a bold, comprehensive and coherent response to the crisis in its multiple dimensions: globally, regionally and nationally. In this light, and cognizant of the various mandates and responsibilities of the organizations of the United Nations system, CEB agreed on the nine joint initiatives presented in box 1 below. This common commitment was designed to assist countries and the global community to confront the crisis, accelerate recovery, and build a fair and inclusive system of globalization based on sustainable economic, social and environmental development for all, while facing the future in a spirit of conviction of the need for transformational change.

Box 1
Joint crisis initiatives

1. *Additional financing for the most vulnerable*. Advocating and devising a joint World Bank-United Nations system mechanism for the common articulation and implementation of additional financing, including through the proposed vulnerability fund of the World Bank. (Lead agencies: World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP))

2. *Food security*. Strengthening programmes to feed the hungry and expanding support to farmers in developing countries. (Ongoing High-level Task Force; lead agencies: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations, World Food Programme (WFP) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD))

3. *Trade*. Fighting protectionism, including through the conclusion of the Doha Round and strengthening Aid for Trade initiatives and finance for trade. (Lead agencies: World Trade Organization and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD))

4. *Green Economy Initiative*. Promoting investment in long-term environmental sustainability and putting the world on a climate-friendly path. (Ongoing initiative; lead agency: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP))

5. *Global jobs pact*. Boosting employment, production, investment and aggregate demand, and promoting decent work for all. (Lead agency: International Labour Organization (ILO))

6. *Social protection floor*. Ensuring access to basic social services, shelter, and empowerment and protection of the poor and vulnerable. (Lead agencies: World Health Organization (WHO) and ILO)

7. *Humanitarian action, security and social stability*. Emergency action to protect lives and livelihoods, meeting hunger and humanitarian needs, protecting displaced people and shoring up security and social stability. (Lead agency: WFP)

8. *Technology and innovation*. Developing technological infrastructure to facilitate the promotion of and access to innovation. (Lead agencies: World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU))

9. *Monitoring and analysis*. Strengthening macroeconomic and financial surveillance and implementing an effective economic early warning system; urgently establishing a United Nations system-wide vulnerability monitoring and alert mechanism to track developments and report on the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of the crisis. (Lead agency: Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat)

B. Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

10. In its resolution 63/230, the General Assembly considered that a theme for the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty should be "Full employment and decent work for all". CEB had, through the development of the toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work, already made important contributions to promoting United Nations system policy coherence in this area. As the principal body for system-wide coordination on programme issues, the High-level Committee on Programmes provides a well-established forum for the development of a coordinated, substantive and coherent system-wide plan of action on the contribution that full employment and decent work for all could make to the eradication of poverty. Against this backdrop and in response to the General Assembly resolution, CEB endorsed the establishment of a time-bound cluster group of members of the High-level Committee on Programmes to prepare a draft action plan for review during the next reporting period.

C. Climate change

11. The CEB initiative launched early in 2007 in response to the global challenge of climate change took more concrete shape during the reporting period, with the identification of focus and cross-cutting areas for coordination and action (see

box 2 below). The United Nations system increasingly spoke with one voice on this issue, for example, through the statement delivered by the Secretary-General at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The system has also increasingly delivered as one, as demonstrated in the joint publication entitled *Acting on Climate Change: The United Nations Delivering as One* (available online at http://www.un.org/climatechange), which was launched by the Secretary-General and other United Nations system leaders at a side event in Poznan.

12. Given the urgency of achieving a major global deal at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen in December 2009, the Secretary-General declared 2009 a crucial year for climate change. In view of this, the United Nations system has intensified its efforts at more coordinated and effective delivery in all areas related to climate change. With the original programmatic work at the headquarters level now completed, emphasis has shifted to delivering results at the regional and country levels. The hope is that determined efforts to bridge the [illegible] implementation gap will contribute to long-term cooperative action at all levels, thereby helping to support the implementation of a successful outcome in the Framework Convention negotiations. The United Nations system has, through these efforts, demonstrated its readiness and ability to also assist with the implementation of new mandates that will result from the Copenhagen conference.

Box 2
Climate change action framework

Five focus areas and four cross-cutting areas identified in response to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiation process and in pursuance of the broader mandates and capacities in the United Nations system, with corresponding convening agencies to ensure better coordination of concrete deliverables as follows:

Focus area	*Convening agency*
Adaptation	High-level Committee on Programmes, collectively
Technology transfer	UNIDO, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Reduction of emissions from deforestation and degradation	UNDP, FAO, UNEP
Financing mitigation and adaptation action	UNDP, World Bank Group
Capacity-building	UNDP, UNEP

Cross-cutting area	
Climate knowledge: science, assessment, monitoring and early warning	World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Supporting global, regional and national action	Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations regional commissions, UNDP
Climate-neutral United Nations	UNEP
Public awareness-raising	United Nations Communications Group, UNEP

Increased synergies. Programmatic work at the headquarters level through the High-level Committee on Programmes is connected to United Nations system activities at the country level through the United Nations Development Group and the individual United Nations country teams. The United Nations regional commissions correspondingly work at the regional level, while the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change serves as the link to the global climate change negotiation process.

Online inventory of United Nations system activities on climate change developed, both as an information resource and a planning tool (accessible at http://www.un.org/climatechange/projectsearch).

Online portal, "Gateway to the UN System's Work on Climate Change" (http://www.un.org/climatechange), which provides access to the publication entitled *Acting on Climate Change: The United Nations System Delivering as One* and links to individual agency climate change pages.

Knowledge management website for use by United Nations staff, delegates and outside experts dealing with climate change, established in cooperation with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (http://www.climate-l.org).

13. Organizations of the United Nations system continued their efforts towards achieving the goal of a climate neutral United Nations. Good progress was made during the reporting period, with the majority of organizations having designated climate-neutral focal points and several organizations also having established internal task forces and designated senior-level champions. The system's main sources of greenhouse gas emissions were identified and an inventory of data to estimate greenhouse gas footprints was begun in over one half of the organizations of the system. In addition, several organizations have developed strategies outlining how they intend to move towards climate neutrality and have begun to implement some of those measures.

D. United Nations development system working together

14. At its second regular session 2008, CEB endorsed the management and accountability framework for the United Nations development and resident coordinator system, including a functional firewall for the resident coordinator system. The agreement contains a vision to guide the creation of a better-managed and more efficient United Nations development system. To operationalize the agreement, the United Nations Development Group developed and endorsed a detailed implementation plan with clear and actionable outputs, timelines, responsibilities and accountabilities for actors at the headquarters, regional and field levels. Progress will be tracked throughout 2009 and the framework will be assessed at the end of the year.

15. The second round of stocktaking reports has been received from the eight delivering-as-one pilot project countries. The lessons learned from the stocktaking exercise will be presented in a synthesis report in June 2009. In 2008, the focus of the pilot projects shifted from process orientation to the implementation of programmes jointly developed in the spirit of the One United Nations initiative. Throughout the year, there were increased indications of alignment with national priorities and reform agendas, including increased alignment with the Paris Declaration, with several pilot countries scoring above the targets for 2008 set by the United Nations in relation to Paris Declaration indicators. Good examples were noted of resident and non-resident agency collaboration in regard to national requests for support in response to climate change, increasing food prices and the impact of the financial crisis on vulnerable populations. The United Nations Development Group developed tools to mainstream the integrated programme and operations approach applied in the pilot countries. It is expected that the toolkit assembled by the United Nations Development Group, which was launched earlier in 2009 and which incorporates guidance, lessons and experiences from both pilot and non-pilot countries, will further help facilitate voluntary change management processes at the country level with a view to achieving greater efficiency, coherence, relevance and effectiveness, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/208, on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

16. Countries which are in a position to adopt the elements of the delivering-as-one approach (including the development of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework Action Plan) towards more integrated programming at the country level and which voluntarily come forward to do so may be considered eligible for the expanded delivering-as-one funding window for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, recently established under the governance structure of the United Nations Development Group. The objective of the expanded funding window is to provide an incentive for the United Nations system to improve the coherence, effectiveness and relevance of its operations at the country level. The expanded funding window builds on the success of the broadening of the Spain/UNDP Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund to include additional donor countries and United Nations organizations.

17. The joint preparations undertaken within the United Nations Development Group for the High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Accra, 2-4 September 2008), are illustrative of the advances made towards harmonizing and coordinating the work of the funds, programmes and agencies that constitute the United Nations

development system. In follow-up to the Forum, which resulted in the adoption of the Accra Agenda for Action and the broad consensus that aid volumes must be matched with further improvements in aid quality and effectiveness, the United Nations Development Group is in the process of preparing a corresponding guidance note and a strengthened action plan on aid effectiveness to provide practical guidance to United Nations country teams for effective engagement in the rapidly changing aid environment.

18. The 2008 survey on monitoring the Paris Declaration, which was undertaken in the run-up to the High-level Forum, confirmed that the United Nations system had made tangible progress in implementing the Paris principles over the preceding two years. However, enhanced efforts are needed to achieve the targets set for 2010. In particular, there is need for improved utilization of country systems, including national procurement and public financial management systems. The United Nations Development Group is, in this connection, developing aid effectiveness indicators for United Nations Development Assistance Framework programmes, which will reflect the specific nature of United Nations contributions to national development.

19. Similar to the joint preparations undertaken for the High-level Forum, the preparations for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008, also benefited from a collaborative effort in the form of a joint task team of the United Nations Development Group and High-level Committee on Programmes. Work is currently ongoing within the United Nations development system to analyse how best to support country capacity to both manage official development assistance as effectively as possible and access diverse sources of finance.

E. Working together in crisis and post-crisis countries

20. During the reporting period, the United Nations development system actively promoted the building and strengthening of the relationships between headquarters and country teams in order to enhance coordination in crisis and post-crisis related processes. The United Nations Development Group engaged in both global and country-specific policy decisions by: (a) contributing to the reports of the Secretary-General and to the considerations of his Policy Committee; (b) participating in the development and implementation of the integrated mission planning process, as well as the development of the integrated strategic framework; (c) participating in integrated task forces and collaborating with the Peacebuilding Support Office on matters concerning the Peacebuilding Fund and peacebuilding strategies; (d) launching a post-conflict needs assessment toolkit and successfully applying an updated post-conflict needs assessment methodology in Georgia; and (e) supporting integrated assessment and planning processes in over 20 crisis and post-crisis countries, through training programmes and the financing of strategic planners.

21. With the aim of reducing transaction costs for partner countries and increasing coherence in and the impact of the assistance provided, the United Nations and the World Bank in October 2008 agreed on a partnership framework for crisis and post-crisis situations. The partnership framework will be operationalized through the United Nations Development Group-World Bank operational annex to the agreement and the fiduciary principles accord. In September 2008, the European Commission,

the United Nations system and the World Bank also signed a joint declaration on post-crisis assessments and recovery planning. The declaration provides a common platform for partnership and action, which is central to the delivery of an effective and sustainable international response to disaster and conflict-related crises.

F. Security and safety of staff

22. The Board expressed serious concern over the increasing safety and security risks faced by United Nations personnel in many parts of the world. Following the release of the report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide in June 2008, the Secretary-General requested the High-level Committee on Management to undertake a detailed review of the recommendations contained in the Panel's report and to prepare actionable recommendations and options for a more effective United Nations system-wide security management system.

23. The steering group for staff safety and security set up in response to the Secretary-General's request presented its findings to CEB in April 2009. Key elements were as follows:

(a) A fundamental shift in culture and mindset in the United Nations from "when to leave" to "how to stay", working closely with host Governments and local communities both to understand risk and manage it, through a new approach to security management which includes the concept of acceptance of risk backed by a new framework for risk management and a revised security level system;

(b) A greater focus placed on the safety and security of national staff;

(c) Definition of the terms of reference and composition of the Executive Group on Security, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, to facilitate the rapid decision-making capacity of the Under-Secretary-General when there is an impasse or when exigencies arise and life and limb are at stake;

(d) Introduction of a new, threat-focused concept for a security level system, which also delineates the appropriate level of decision-making and oversight between Headquarters and the field;

(e) Development, by December 2009, of a United Nations policy and guidelines for United Nations estate safety and security;

(f) Reaffirmation of the responsibility of Member States in respect of the safety and security of United Nations staff, both as host Governments and as providers of the necessary, increased financial resources at a level that is adequate to match the new needs.

24. The Board endorsed the recommendations of the steering committee and released a statement on the United Nations system's commitment to a strengthened system-wide security management system (see box 3 below).

Box 3

Statement on safety and security of the staff of the United Nations system

Thousands of women and men working for the United Nations system around the world regularly face violence and threats from armed conflict, terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, harassment and intimidation. Given the increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions faced by staff, the United Nations is at a critical juncture. Urgent and dramatic action is needed to strengthen a United Nations security framework that seeks to protect staff and allows operations to continue in insecure and unstable environments. We need to adopt a shift in culture and mindset, from a "when to leave" to a "how to stay" approach to one of security management.

As the executive heads of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and members of the Chief Executives Board, we:

- Will urgently address deficiencies in the current security management system.
- Will provide guidance for the design of a new stronger, more dynamic and proactive security and risk management architecture.
- Recognize that the safety and security of the staff of the United Nations system are integral to the activities undertaken by the United Nations and should be included in the earliest stages of programme planning and at all levels, particularly at the country level.
- Will act collectively to implement a comprehensive plan for a strengthened and enhanced system-wide security management system, as agreed by the Board at its session in April 2009.
- Recognize that there are financial costs associated with providing adequate security, and that there may be conflict between the mandate to carry out operations and the ability to do so if there are not sufficient security resources.
- Call on the governing bodies of CEB member organizations to ensure that the safety and security of staff are mainstreamed at all levels of United Nations system activities, with the aim of promoting security management as an integral and enabling part of policy, planning, operational and administrative considerations for United Nations system programmes and activities.
- Urge Member States to uphold fully their responsibilities as host Governments by recognizing the changed security environment within which the staff of the United Nations system must operate and ensuring that all necessary mitigating measures are taken to protect staff from identified threats.
- Call on Member States to support the core resources for the United Nations security system at a level that is adequate to match the new reality, and to ensure that organizations of the United Nations system are provided with appropriate and sustainable funding for security so as to enable the safe and effective execution of their mandates.

G. Business practices

25. The Board has been active in developing a plan of action for the harmonization of business practices in the United Nations system. The plan proposes initiatives in a number of key areas, covering all of the major management functions of organizations of the United Nations system (i.e., human resources, information communications and technology, finance and budget, and procurement). Its scope is limited to the functions and processes for which responsibility rests within the purview of the authority delegated to the executive heads by their respective governing bodies. In line with the CEB endeavour to enhance transparency and accountability, a briefing on the plan was provided to the General Assembly by the Chair of the High-level Committee on Management and the Director of the CEB secretariat in the context of the informal consultations on system-wide coherence, held on 13 June 2008.

26. As moving forward with the plan of action is contingent upon the availability of extrabudgetary resources, following the plan's endorsement by the Board, a funding proposal was circulated to potential donors in October 2008. The first contribution of approximately US$ 270,000 was made on 20 December 2008, through the generous support of the Government of New Zealand, to fund a project on developing a common framework to deal with suspect vendors.

27. Many of the projects in the plan of action are integral to the programme of work of the High-level Committee on Management but have been incorporated in the plan in order to raise their objectives to a higher level of ambition, with the assistance of extrabudgetary resources. Implementation has already begun in priority areas on the basis of the contributions received so far and the internal resources earmarked by United Nations organizations. Among the priorities are projects related to procurement (such as those on a common framework to deal with suspect vendors and on enhancements to the United Nations Global Marketplace) and human resources (e.g., comparative analysis of human resources practices and procedures, with particular attention to the employment arrangements of staff working in the contingent workforce and those in non-headquarters locations), financial management (including a study on potential common services and the development of a common conceptual framework on capital budgeting) and information and communications technology (e.g., the development of a common directory for the United Nations system).

28. The plan of action builds on the premise that, within a system structured around a variety of mandates, increased coherence in the working modalities of the member organizations which contribute significantly to their ability to deliver better programmatic results.

29. The plan was developed with a view to finding and agreeing on system-wide solutions to issues that have emerged, in many cases, at the country level. This approach ensures the alignment of country-level operations with the strategic directions and priorities pursued at the policy level. It also ensures that the needs of country operations are one of the cornerstones for harmonization of business practices at the global level. It places a particular focus on the needs emerging at the field level, as experiences and issues identified at the country level, including through delivering-as-one pilot projects, are fed into the system-wide development of common policies and standards at the headquarters level. The High-level

Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group have worked closely together to ensure a clear division of labour in relation to business practice coherence, with the Committee leading work on harmonization of global business practices and the Group leading that on enhancement of business operations at the country level.

30. In 2008, the work of the United Nations Development Group in the area of business operations focused on issues raised at the country level, particularly those flagged by the delivering-as-one pilot countries. It was agreed that the eight pilot countries, supported by the Group, would each take a lead in specific areas of business operations to explore what could be done towards achieving greater simplification and harmonization. Progress was made in the pilot countries in the areas of procurement, information and communications technology and human resources. On 29 January 2009, the United Nations Development Group agreed on a series of proposals to expand the lessons learned to country offices, including the adoption of an integrated programme and operations approach in United Nations Development Assistance Framework roll-out countries and the launching of the United Nations Development Group toolkit. Another set of proposals was agreed on specifically for the delivering-as-one pilot projects and included scaling up of information and communications technology solutions to increase inter-agency collaboration and proposals to advance harmonization in the area of human resources, that is, fostering inter-agency mobility and accessibility as regards the training and learning resources of organizations of the system.

III. Other significant issues on the agenda of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2008/09

31. During the reporting period, CEB, through the High-level Committee on Programmes, has addressed the evolving global situation and received regular briefings on recent developments in a number of important areas, including Africa's development needs, financing for development, the global food security crisis, the Millennium Development Goals, system-wide coherence, and trade. In addition, the Board considered a number of other significant issues, as described below.

A. Evaluation

32. In April 2007, CEB had endorsed a proposal to establish the substantive parameters and process for a three-phased evaluation of the eight delivering-as-one pilot projects in Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam. The first outcome of this process, a synthesis report of the assessments conducted by the United Nations Evaluation Group, was before the High-level Committee on Programmes during the reporting period. While commending the Group on the appropriateness of the process of the assessments, the high quality of the synthesis report and the usefulness of the findings and suggestions, the decision was taken to suspend the next two phases of the proposed evaluation, a process evaluation and an evaluation of results, in the light of the independent evaluation called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/208, on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

33. During the reporting period, CEB, through the High-level Committee on Management, has reiterated the importance that it attaches to the evaluation function and its view that enhancing the capacity and strength of this function across the organizations of the United Nations system is critical to increasing the credibility and impact of their programmes. The need for a mechanism to manage and implement system-wide evaluations was, in this respect, broadly supported and will be kept under review by the Board's three high-level committees.

B. Regional coherence

34. The High-level Committee on Programmes considered the item entitled "United Nations coherence at the regional level: synergies and complementarities between the regional coordination mechanism and regional directors' team" on the basis of a report presented by the United Nations regional commissions, which was released in July 2008 as a contribution to the ongoing discussion and reflection within the United Nations system on improving coherence and delivering as one at the regional level. The considerations centred on how best to articulate the linkage between the functions of policy analysis at the regional level and the global policy analysis function of the High-level Committee on Programmes, without giving rise to a bureaucratic, report-intensive approach. It was noted that the regional directors teams had brought a good regional perspective to the United Nations Development Group as far as operational activities were concerned, and that the report had recommended that there be a similar link between the regional coordination mechanism, which addressed the policy and analysis part of the agenda, and the High-level Committee on Programmes. The prospect of a clearer division of labour and greater collaboration between the regional directors teams and regional coordination mechanisms was thought to hold great promise for bringing about more coherence in the work of the United Nations system.

35. The High-level Committee on Programmes agreed to invite the regional commissions, as convenors of the regional coordination mechanisms, to bring to the deliberations of the mechanisms those global issues that the Committee might wish to pursue at the regional level, bearing in mind regional priorities and the roles and functions of the mechanisms. The Committee also invited the regional commissions to bring to its deliberations any emerging interregional issues which merited consideration at the global level.

C. Campaign to end violence against women and girls

36. The Board was informed of the UNite to end violence against women campaign, which had been launched by the Secretary-General on 25 February 2008 with the overall objective of increasing public awareness, political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. The campaign provided a common framework for the United Nations system and its partners to address the scourge of violence at the global, regional and national levels.

37. The Board recognized the importance of the campaign, took note of its expected outcomes and invited organizations of the United Nations system to contribute to the campaign in the areas of their comparative advantage. The Office

of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality were, in concert with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other relevant actors, invited to report back and provide updated information to the High-level Committee on Programmes on the progress made in the implementation of the campaign.

D. Contribution of the United Nations system to the Economic and Social Council

38. The High-level Committee on Programmes considered the possibilities for strengthening the engagement of the United Nations system in the work of the Economic and Social Council, stressing the need to define approaches and develop modalities to engage the organizations of the system in a real dialogue with the Council. It was envisaged that two panel discussions would be organized during the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2009, one on the role of the United Nations system in sustainable development, highlighting the food and energy crises and climate change, and the second on the impact of the current financial crisis on sustainable development, including its social consequences. By building such substantive interaction with intergovernmental processes, the organizations of the United Nations system would be brought closer to the work of the Council. A joint review by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the CEB secretariat will be undertaken to contemplate additional options for enhancing the contribution of the system to the Council. As part of this review, consideration will be given to raising the level of participation in the Council's coordination segment and improving the transparency of inter-agency coordination processes.

E. Disaster risk reduction

39. The Board reviewed the progress made towards mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in the policies and strategies in the United Nations system. Given the growing frequency and severity of natural disasters in recent years, CEB agreed on the need to consider disaster risk reduction as a cross-cutting issue at all levels, and endorsed the following actions by entities of the United Nations system:

(a) Examining the extent to which their existing mandates or policies are in line with the Hyogo Framework and, if necessary, requesting their executive boards to consider revising/updating them;

(b) Reviewing and recognizing the stage they have reached in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction activities in their ongoing work;

(c) Based on the above reviews, seeking to reallocate resources, as feasible, in accordance with their roles and responsibilities for disaster risk reduction, in particular in support of the needs of national counterparts in the context of the United Nations country team work and closely coordinated under the supervision of the resident coordinators;

(d) Incorporating disaster risk reduction objectives in their own results-based management systems, including developing and monitoring the appropriate outcome indicators, measured against the Millennium Development Goals;

(e) Contributing to strong United Nations system leadership on disaster risk reduction in their own sectors and participating in International Strategy for Disaster Reduction processes to advocate at the highest political levels, particularly in the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and events associated with the General Assembly and other governing bodies of the United Nations system;

(f) Deciding to take up this issue periodically in order to enable reporting on the progress made.

F. Science and technology

40. In response to General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review, the High-level Committee on Programmes endorsed a proposal to amend and expand the terms of reference of the United Nations Group on the Information Society, with a view to giving science and technology more prominence. The Group had originally been established as an inter-agency mechanism for coordinating substantive and policy issues related to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. The Group was requested to provide the High-level Committee on Programmes with a report containing recommendations on how the United Nations system could strengthen its role in facilitating access by developing countries to new and emerging technologies, as well as assist in mainstreaming science and technology, including information and communications technologies, in national development or poverty reduction strategies, in accordance with the priorities of countries.

G. International Public Sector Accounting Standards

41. Recognizing that the introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards would place new emphasis on the value of an organization's assets and thus presented an opportunity to assess potential best practices, particularly with respect to capital budgeting which would facilitate the structuring, financing and monitoring of capital investment activities, and with a view towards addressing greater harmonization in United Nations system budgetary practices, the High-level Committee on Management Finance and Budget Network established a working group during the reporting period to develop a proposal for options for capital budgeting solutions for organizations of the United Nations system. Based on the results of a broad survey, the working group identified a common conceptual framework for the introduction of capital budgeting. The framework provides principles and definitions for capital budgeting in organizations of the United Nations system and offers guidelines on a series of other critical elements, capital budgeting policy, governance, scope and restrictions, structure, financing and compliance with the Standards.

H. Knowledge-sharing

42. With the implementation of the initial phases of a common United Nations system directory, the Information and Communications Technology Network of the High-level Committee on Management, in conjunction with the information and communications technology tasking group of the United Nations Development

Group, took an important step towards greater system-wide knowledge-sharing during the reporting period. While all organizations maintain internal contact directories, the ability of staff members throughout the United Nations system easily to find contact information on colleagues in other organizations has previously proven elusive. In 2008, a pilot project among several organizations successfully demonstrated the feasibility of this service which, with the participation of several agencies, has now moved into production.

I. Human resources

43. During the reporting period, the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management made progress in a number of areas, including the finalization of a policy statement on staff with disabilities, the introduction of a questionnaire for the exit interviews of staff members leaving an organization and the launch of a review of the mandatory age of retirement. During the reporting period, the CEB secretariat took over responsibility for the dual career and staff mobility programme, which had previously been implemented by WFP. The programme, which was expanded to include 15 organizations of the United Nations system and is funded on an extrabudgetary basis by participating organizations, supports staff and their families during their relocation to new duty stations and focuses on increasing the number of accompanying spouses and partners that find employment.

J. Procurement

44. The reporting period marked the first year of existence of the Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management. During this period, the Network focused on aligning its inter-agency efforts with those of the Organization at large. The harmonization of procurement processes and practices in support of field offices, with a particular focus on the project offices in delivering-as-one pilot countries, was central to the work of the Network. Important progress also was made in the further development of the United Nations Global Marketplace (http://www.ungm.org), which is used by more than 2,500 United Nations procurement practitioners and hosts information on approximately 13,000 potential suppliers. The efforts made towards professionalization of the procurement function were further augmented with the development of generic procurement-related job descriptions and a common competency framework, supported by the inclusion of information on the procurement training courses and materials available in the United Nations system in the Procurement Practitioner's Handbook. Another outcome was the practical guidelines for commonly procured goods and services.

K. Collaboration with the Joint Inspection Unit

45. With the Joint Inspection Unit having increasingly included issues with system-wide impact in its work programme, the reporting period saw a closer collaboration between CEB and the Unit. A comprehensive CEB-led exercise assisted in the identification of relevant topics for the Unit's programme of work. CEB also worked closely with the Unit in the preparation of several of its reports,

acting as both an expert subject-matter adviser and a facilitator of input from organizations on the content of the report. Steps were taken to ensure that organizations of the United Nations system provided timely inputs to the CEB companion reports to the Unit's system-wide reports, thereby achieving a more effective report preparation process. Closer coordination between member organizations and the Joint Inspection Unit was discussed by the High-level Committee on Management, which called upon organizations to ensure the free flow of information between each organization and the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as coordinated action on the Unit's recommendations and programme of work. These initiatives, in addition to an increase in informal communication, measurably improved the collaboration between the two inter-agency bodies, to the benefit of the entire United Nations system.

L. Coordination among pillars of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

46. The networks of the High-level Committee on Management and the working groups of the United Nations Development Group collaborated closely during the reporting period to strengthen the coordination and information-sharing mechanisms between their respective constituencies. It was agreed that the consideration of issues that had system-wide implications would be coordinated through the High-level Committee on Management and its networks for purposes of comprehensive consideration and buy-in, while the United Nations Development Group would ensure guidance and support in regard to piloting solutions in countries and, more generally, for the requirements emerging at the country level.

47. A comprehensive stocktaking and prioritization exercise of the management-related initiatives included in their programmes of work was undertaken in 2008 by the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group. An analysis of the activities of both bodies revealed that, although their work programmes often covered the same functional areas there was no real overlap in activities. This conclusion was further strengthened by the Committee's focus on system-wide and inter-agency issues, whereas the United Nations Development Group focused on the operations and business practices of the United Nations development system at the country level.

IV. Looking ahead to 2009/10

48. During the period under review, CEB continued its efforts at furthering coordination and cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system on a wide range of programme, management and operational issues. As pointed out by Member States during the consultations on system-wide coherence held by the General Assembly during its sixty-first to sixty-third sessions, coherence is not a goal in itself but a means of improving the delivery of support to those that need it most. During the reporting period, the Board devoted increasing attention to operational issues at the country level and to alignment of the work of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels.

49. With the attention of the global community centred on the financial and economic crisis, the Board has launched an ambitious response by the entire United Nations system to support vulnerable countries while emphasizing the importance of not losing sight of the threats posed by the longer-term climate change and development challenges. The work of the Board in 2009/10 is expected to be framed by upcoming events, such as the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development (United Nations Headquarters, 1-3 June 2009), the high-level event on climate change (United Nations Headquarters, 22 September 2009) and the 2009 United Nations climate change conference (Copenhagen, 7-18 December 2009), as well as the Millennium Development Goal review summit to be held in 2010. Through its three pillars, CEB will to continue to advance its efforts on many of the issues addressed in 2008/09. CEB and its member organizations will, in moving towards a more effective, coherent and better performing United Nations system, continue to be guided by the mandates provided to them by Member States through their respective governing bodies.